



ASCENDEA

AI / BUSINESS GROWTH / GUIDE & WORKBOOK

Digital Wellbeing at Work — Practical Boundaries & Recovery Workbook

A practical, non-clinical workbook for noticing digital-work triggers, testing small privacy-safe boundaries, using a low-capacity fallback and turning one work-system pressure into a constructive action conversation.



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Your route through this resource

Practical Boundaries & Recovery Workbook.....	3
How to use this workbook.....	3
1. Start with a humane digital-work audit.....	3
2. Choose one trigger to redesign	4
3. Run a small boundary experiment.....	5
4. A minimum-viable day for low capacity	6
5. Sleep and evening technology: ordinary options.....	7
6. Optional pause practice—with alternatives	8
7. When the work system is the issue	8
8. Fourteen-day review without a score.....	9
9. Final decision and action plan	10
Support and boundaries of this workbook	10
References	11

Chapter links and PDF bookmarks support navigation. Writing areas are for handwritten or separate notes, not interactive PDF forms.

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Practical Boundaries & Recovery Workbook

A guide and workbook for people who work through email, messaging, social platforms and AI tools

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Educational, non-clinical resource. This workbook offers optional ideas for noticing digital-work patterns and planning small, privacy-safe changes. It is not a diagnosis, therapy, treatment, medical advice or a substitute for professional care, workplace risk assessment or reasonable adjustments. You decide what is suitable and may stop any exercise.

How to use this workbook

You do not need to complete every page or change every device setting. Start with one situation that repeatedly makes work harder: interruptions, an endless feed, difficult news, comparison, unclear AI boundaries or work messages outside agreed hours. Use the worksheets to describe the situation in plain language, test one small change, and review what you learned.

The examples in this workbook are **illustrative composites**, not testimonials, research findings or promises of results. Digital work is part of many people's income, care responsibilities and relationships. The aim is not to eliminate screens or demand constant availability. It is to make choices more visible and make a realistic conversation about work possible.

Privacy rule: keep personal reflections private. Do not ask colleagues for mood or sleep scores, require disclosure of diagnoses, or collect individual worksheets as a manager. Do not paste sensitive mental-health, client or employee information into an AI tool.

1. Start with a humane digital-work audit

For the next few workdays, notice patterns without trying to grade yourself. You can write words, symbols or nothing at all. There is no pass mark and these notes are not a measurement.

Situation	What was happening?	What did I choose next?	What might make the next instance easier?
Opening the day			
A notification or message			
An endless feed or news item			
A comparison or difficult post			
Switching between tasks			
Finishing work			

Consider **context**, not character: time pressure, unclear priorities, caring, disability, fatigue, access needs, a shared device, a noisy space, a client expectation or a genuinely urgent incident may all shape what is possible. If a prompt increases distress, leave it blank and choose the practical planning page instead.

A private reflection, if useful

These are optional questions for your own planning, not a test or workplace measure.

- When do I most need uninterrupted attention?
- Which digital input is useful, and which is merely arriving by default?
- What makes stopping difficult: uncertainty, a deadline, loneliness, habit, a team norm or something else?
- What would “a little more workable” look like today?

2. Choose one trigger to redesign

The source structure uses four common patterns. They are practical categories, not a clinical model, and they will not fit everyone.

Interruptions

Notifications, banners, watch taps and message badges can compete with a task. An optional experiment is to turn off non-essential alerts, keep calls or messages that genuinely need prompt attention, and choose a catch-up window. Check accessibility and safety first: some people rely on alerts, captions, medication reminders, lone-worker systems, caring arrangements or emergency contacts.

Endless feeds and difficult news

An endless feed can make it easy to continue past the point you intended. You might move a feed app away from the home screen, remove a news widget, use a bookmark rather than an automatic feed, or choose when and where you read news. These are options, not rules. Keep access to information you need for work, community, safeguarding or democratic participation.

Comparison

Curated posts show a narrow slice of other people's lives and work. You could mute, unfollow, limit or rearrange feeds, or use a direct professional channel instead. Do not use this exercise to judge your body, identity, income, career stage or worth. If comparison is linked to persistent distress, seek appropriate support rather than trying to fix it with an app setting.

AI uncertainty and responsibility

AI tools can be useful for drafting or summarising. Where AI processes personal data, the ICO's guidance covers accountability and governance, transparency, accuracy, fairness, security and data minimisation [4](#). Follow your organisation's policy and keep human responsibility for decisions. Before using one, ask:

- Is the data confidential, personal, commercially sensitive or subject to client consent?
- Am I allowed to use this service for this material?
- How will I check accuracy, bias, omissions, accessibility and tone?
- Who owns the decision and who can challenge it?
- Should this be discussed with a manager, client, data-protection lead or professional adviser?

Do not use an AI system as a mental-health assessor, therapist, crisis service or manager's scorecard. Do not put sensitive personal, client or employee information into an AI tool as part of this workbook; for work, follow applicable organisational and data-protection arrangements.

3. Run a small boundary experiment

A boundary is an agreement about access, timing or attention. It works best when it is specific and negotiated where other people are affected.

My situation:

What I will change (one small experiment):

When it applies:

What remains available for genuine urgency:

Who needs to know or agree:

Access, caring, shift-work or safety adjustment:

Review date:

Possible experiments:

- a 15-minute message window after a defined work block;
- status text that says when you will reply and how to contact you for an urgent matter;
- a separate browser profile for work and personal tasks;
- removing non-essential badges while retaining required alerts;
- charging a phone outside the bedroom **only if** that is workable and does not remove an alarm or safety contact;
- a no-meeting focus period agreed with the team;
- a written end-of-day handover so unfinished work is not held only in your head.

A boundary is not a demand that everyone has the same capacity. A shift worker, carer, disabled worker, parent, contractor or person in a customer-facing role may need a different arrangement. If you have little control over timing, record that as a work-design issue rather than a personal failure.

4. A minimum-viable day for low capacity

On a difficult day, reduce the plan rather than forcing a complete reset. Choose one essential work action, one communication action and one recovery or transition action. “Recovery” may mean water, food, a quiet minute, a change of sensory input, a walk, a stretch, asking for help or stopping work at an agreed time. It is not a productivity technique or a treatment.

Essential work action:

Communication or handover:

Small transition/recovery choice:

What can be postponed, delegated or renegotiated: ____

Who can help change the work system:

If the day is unsafe or the workload cannot fit available time, the next action may be escalation, a deadline conversation, a staffing decision or an adjustment—not another personal routine.

5. Sleep and evening technology: ordinary options

Screens are only one part of sleep. NHS Every Mind Matters suggests trying a regular sleep routine, a calm wind-down and, where possible, avoiding phones, tablets and computers for an hour before bed. It also suggests making the room comfortable, not forcing sleep, and seeking help for persistent insomnia 1. These are general options, not guarantees or treatment instructions.

Choose only what fits your home, alarm, caring, shift pattern, disability and safety needs:

- set a gentle end-of-work reminder;
- write tomorrow's first work step before closing the laptop;
- put a work device on silent or out of sight if that is safe;
- use a book, calm audio, quiet music or another non-screen activity;
- keep an essential contact or alarm available;
- if sleep remains difficult or self-help is not helping, use the appropriate NHS or local health route rather than escalating self-discipline.

One evening change I choose:

A backup for a shared home, night shift or difficult day: ____

6. Optional pause practice—with alternatives

Some people like a brief ordinary pause or gentle breathing exercise. It is optional. Do not force a deep breath, hold your breath or try to change your body's response. Stop if it feels uncomfortable, dizzying or distressing.

If you choose it: sit, stand or remain where you are; notice that you are pausing; allow breathing to remain natural; then return to the next practical choice. No claim is made about changing the body, treating distress or improving a health condition.

Alternative pauses include:

- look away from the screen and name the next physical action;
- take a short walk or change rooms if accessible;
- drink water or adjust lighting, sound or display settings;
- stretch only if comfortable, or use a sensory aid;
- write one sentence of the handover;
- speak to a trusted person.

7. When the work system is the issue

Personal boundaries cannot replace employer action. HSE says employers have a legal duty to protect workers from stress at work by assessing risks and acting on them. Its six work-design areas are **demands, control, support, relationships, role and change** ². Acas describes causes such as excessive or conflicting demands, little control, poor support, conflict, unclear responsibilities and organisational change, and notes that workers do not have to disclose personal problems to an employer ³.

Use this page for a team-safe conversation. Do not collect individual mood or sleep scores.

Work-system pressure	What is happening in the work?	Action owner	Review date
Demands: volume, pace, deadlines			
Control: decisions, timing, tools			
Support: staffing, training, help			

Work-system pressure	What is happening in the work?	Action owner	Review date
Relationships: conflict, respect, speaking up			
Role: priorities and responsibilities			
Change: notice, consultation, uncertainty			

Conversation opener: “I want to discuss the work conditions and what can change. I do not need to share a diagnosis. The pressure I can describe is . A practical change to consider is . When shall we review it?”

Managers: offer choice, listen without demanding disclosure, address workload and role clarity, consider reasonable adjustments and use the organisation's risk-assessment and support routes. Do not use this workbook for fitness-to-work decisions, performance scoring or employee surveillance.

8. Fourteen-day review without a score

After your chosen experiment, record observations in words. A change may be unsuitable, impossible or less important than a work-system action. That is useful information.

Experiment:

What was easier or harder?

What got in the way?

What should I keep, adapt or stop?

What needs a team or manager conversation?

Next review date:

9. Final decision and action plan

Choose one line for each decision. Keep the plan proportionate.

- ☐ Keep the experiment as it is.
- ☐ Adapt the timing, tool or access arrangement.
- ☐ Stop it because it is not useful, accessible or safe.
- ☐ Ask for a work-design change.
- ☐ Seek support from a trusted person, manager, union, occupational-health route or health professional.

My next action, in plain language:

Owner:

By when:

What will show that the action happened (not a wellbeing score):

If it cannot happen:

Support and boundaries of this workbook

This workbook is not clinical care. If stress is affecting your life, or things you try yourself are not helping, NHS guidance says you can speak to a GP; adults can also self-refer to NHS Talking Therapies in England [5](#). Services differ across the UK, so use the relevant service for your nation. For urgent mental-health help in England, call NHS 111 and select the mental-health option or use 111 online. If someone's life is at risk or you cannot keep yourself or someone else safe, call 999 or go to A&E [6](#).

For work-related concerns, consider a manager, trade union representative, occupational-health team or an appropriate workplace support route. You do not need to disclose more personal information than is necessary for the support or adjustment you are requesting.

References

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